DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 387 850 CS 509 063

AUTHOR Strong, Dee A.
TITLE Promoting "Inclusion" in a Multicultural Classroom through Structured Learning Exercises.
PUB DATE Apr 95
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Central States Communication Association (Indianapolis, IN, April 19-23, 1995).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Environment; College Students; *Cultural Differences; Higher Education; *Interpersonal Communication; *Learning Activities; *Multicultural Education; *Self Concept; Speech Communication; Student Needs
IDENTIFIERS Diversity (Student); *Structured Learning

ABSTRACT

Instructors often employ the use of structured learning exercises (SLE) to enhance students' understanding of material being discussed in the classroom. As classes become more culturally diverse, it is important that instructors become aware of the changing dynamics of students' needs. These needs can often be met through SLEs. Many college campuses have developed a hybrid course that combines speech with interpersonal communication. This combination works well; many steps can be taken through interpersonal communication to prepare students for delivering speeches. The added dimension of culturally diverse classes provides instructors with the opportunity to use structured learning activities to promote inclusion among all students. Four effective SLEs are: (1) a questionnaire for self-analysis with questions such as, "How effective are you as an interpersonal communicator?" or, "Describe situations in which you have the most difficulty communicating with others"; (2) an activity in which students treat each other according to the labels that have been affixed to their foreheads; (3) a meat-and-potatoes dialogue in which partners ask each other personal questions about their self-esteem, their perception of others, and their degree of openness; and (4) impromptu speeches that might, for instance, ask students to explain why a cartoon is funny. (TB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 387 850

PROMOTING INCLUSION IN A MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOM THROUGH STRUCTURED LEARNING EXERCISES

Dee A. Strong
Director of AmeriCorps
Instructor of Leadership Studies
Fort Hays State University
600 Park Street
Hays, KS 67601
ACDS@FHSUVM.FHSU.EDU
(913) 628-5897

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
D. Strong
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

A paper presented at the
Central States Communication Association's
1995 Convention
April 19-23, 1995 Indianapolis, IN

CS 509063

Running Head: "INCLUSION"

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PROMOTING "INCLUSION" IN A MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOM THROUGH STRUCTURED LEARNING EXERCISES

Instructors often employ the use of structured learning exercises (SLE) to enhance students understanding of material being discussed in the classroom. As classes become more culturally diverse, it is important that instructors become aware of the changing dynamics of students needs. These needs can often be met through SLE's.

Many college campuses have developed a hybrid course that combines speech with interpersonal communication. This combination works well together as many steps can be taken through interpersonal communication to prepare students for delivering speeches. The added dimension of culturally diverse classes provide instructors with the opportunity to use structured learning activities to promote inclusion among all students.

Grant and Melnick (1977) observed that instructors are, "expected to understand individual students and to demonstrate the ability to meet individual needs and develop individual talents" (p. 215). It is equally important for instructors to provide tools needed so that students work toward an interpersonal

understanding of different cultures. By expanding students awareness we can begin to show them how they contribute personally in a diverse society.

Interpersonal communication skills are essential. Due to rapid technological advances these skills are needed more now than ever before. Newmark and Asante (1976) believe that "understanding intercultural communication will not only promote effective and meaningful interactions with those who are different, but will simultaneously enable a person to have a sound sense of self" (p. 1). One place to begin this process is in the classroom through structured learning exercises.

There are a variety of reasons why instructors use SLE's. The more obvious include being able to reinforce lecture material and to provide students with some "hands on" practice. Other, more subtle, reasons include giving students an opportunity to discover others' value systems, improve language fidelity and decrease communication apprehension. Newmark and Asante (1976) state, "the more comfortable people are with themselves, the less anxiety they will experience when they communicate with people of another culture" (p. 3).

Benjamin Lee Whorf and Edward Sapir (cited in Gouran, Miller, & Wiethoff, 1992) suggest that language determines how we think (p. 80). For international students, the process of thinking and translating simultaneously may be a deterrent when communicating effectively with others. Pauses are necessary as students translate and develop their responses. These pauses may be perceived as awkward. This leads to unnecessary vocal fillers and nervous nonverbal actions. Behaviors that vary from the norm often cause nervousness and a culture gap develops.

By using structured learning exercises, students can become more comfortable with each other, improving relations within the classroom, which will carry over to improved relations outside the university. As students develop acquaintances in class, the level of self-consciousness decreases and they begin to feel less nervous when talking with others.

The following SLE's were chosen because they have helped my students overcome nervousness and decrease their communication apprehension. By including students from all cultures, students not only learn how to communicate with each other, but learn skills to take with them to use at home, work, and play.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR

COMMUNICATION SELF-ANALYSIS ACTIVITY

I begin with this structured learning exercise because it allows students to express their ideas about their personal communication style. Once they have answered the questions and written their paragraphs, the information is a good tool to facilitate class discussion on interpersonal communication. Through discussion different beliefs, attitudes, and values can be presented.

This SLE can also be used in dyads. After completing the questions, have students choose a partner and ask them to share their answers with each other. This approach provides a more personal atmosphere and provides an opportunity for students to become aquainted.

COMMUNICATION SELF-ANALYSIS ACTIVITY
Author Unknown

1. Define interpersonal communication in your own words.

2. How effective are you as in interpersonal (face-to-face) communicator?

3. Describe situations in which you have the most difficulty communicating with others. Why?

4. How satisfied are you with your progress in the following areas: Explain why.
   A. Educational
   B. Occupational
   C. Social
   D. Other: _____

5. What are your most outstanding individual characteristics, both positive and negative?
   \+ -

6. How do each of these affect your interpersonal communication?

7. What kind of "first impression" do you leave with others? Why do you think so?

WHO WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE?

In one paragraph, describe the person you would like to be. What would your personality look like? What would your attitudes (likes/dislikes) be? How would you relate to other people? How would you communicate? (Write your paragraph on the back of this page.)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR

WHAT IS MY LABEL? ACTIVITY

The purpose of this exercise is to sensitize students to labeling and being labeled. It also allows students to explore the effects that labeling has on communication. Being exposed to labeling can help students understand the effects of discrimination.

TIME REQUIRED:
Approximately 25 minutes.

GROUP SIZE:
Divide entire group into subgroups.

MATERIALS:
Sticky labels with a label such as: know-it-all, jock, rich, poor, President, homeless, etc., written on each one.

DESCRIPTION:
Without the students seeing the sticky labels, adhere a different label to the forehead of each member in a subgroup. Each subgroup is then to discuss a current controversial issue for ten minutes. Without directly telling an individual what their label is, subgroup members are to nonverbally and verbally treat their subgroup members as some would treat individuals labeled as the subgroup members' labels designate. After each subgroup discussion has been completed, the entire class (without removing their labels) will discuss the following questions.

QUESTIONS:
1. What do you think your labels are?
2. What aided you in determining your identities?
3. How do you feel about being labeled?
4. How has this activity made you more sensitive to labeling and being labeled?
5. How does labeling affect communication?

INSTRUCTIONS FOR

MEAT AND POTATOES DIALOGUE

Having used the "Communication Self-analysis" activity and the "Labeling" activity, students are usually more comfortable with each other and are ready for some self-disclosure. The "Meat and Potatoes Dialogue" is an excellent tool to facilitate this disclosure process.

Sandy Rupp, of Fort Hays State University, developed this exercise for her Lab in Interpersonal Communication class. This activity provides an opportunity to involve all students, regardless of their cultural background, to become involved in the communication process.

Have students choose a partner (preferably someone they are not already close to). In an interview format, have the students discuss the questions provided in the activity. Then have them write at least a one page paper telling what happened in their communication dyad by answering the questions at the end of the activity.

MEAT AND POTATOES DIALOGUE

"The greatest experience in life is when lives interact and two human beings are able to communicate." Sandy Rupp

INSTRUCTIONS:

Dyads, please use the following topics of conversation to probe your own communication practices. Find a relaxed, uninterrupted segment of time and space where you can concentrate exclusively on your conversation and interaction. Do not allow yourself to be distracted. Please spend at least 50 minutes attempting to engage in "genuine dialogue".

Write at least a one page paper telling what happened in your communication in your dyad. Use the questions at the end as guides.

TOPICS OF CONVERSATION:

Self Esteem:

1. Do you judge yourself to have a positive or negative self esteem?

2. What associations, experiences, social or cultural influence, power relationships, have had the greatest impact on your self esteem?

3. Reflect on some experience that really stands out in your mind and try to determine what affect that experience has had on your self concept.

4. Do you use defense mechanisms often? Which ones? Relate an incident where you have protected your self esteem by using a defense mechanism.

Perception:

1. Are you basically oriented toward people as friends, enemies, or "other"?

2. Do you stereotype people? Explain. Does this practice keep you from meaningful relationships? Have you been stereotyped?

3. Is there anyone in your life whom you have a "halo effect"?

Self Disclosure:

1. What is your degree of openness? What affects how open you are with another?

2. Describe your trust level in most relationships.

MEAT AND POTATOES DIALOGUE

Self Disclosure, Continued:

3. Do you tend to have any dogmatic or authoritarian attitudes?

4. When do you feel lonely?

5. Can you think of a relationship that went "bad"? Was any of Eric Fromm's four elements of productive love missing? Care, responsibility, respect, knowledge. Explain.

6. What is your reaction to rejection? What do you do? How do you try again? What do you think about the idea, "love is a decision"?

Write your paper answering the following questions. Use examples from your discussion to reinforce your answers.

QUESTIONS:

1. Were you "open" to your partner? Was he/she open to you?

2. What was the level of trust?

3. Did you/they give good feedback?

4. Were there any barriers in your communication?

5. Did anything help to ease communication?

6. Was this a satisfying experience?

7. How did you feel when you were talking to your partner?

8. Did you try to be supportive? How?

9. Did you reveal your public self or your private self? What "self" was your partner revealing to you, in your judgment?

INSTRUCTIONS FOR

DECREASING COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION

THROUGH IMPROMPTU SPEECHES

In 1982, McCroskey (cited in Cronin, Grice and Olsen Jr., 1994) surveyed over 30,000 adults and college students revealing that 75% of them feared public speaking. Nerves make people want to avoid speaking, when they do have to deliver a speech their speech rate increases, they use more verbal nonfluencies and sometimes forget to breathe!

One way to help students overcome their fear of speaking is through impromptu speeches. This type of speech is short, students don't have to research the topic, and impromptu's can be less intimidating when humor is encouraged.

Humorous topics are abundant in our society. I sometimes clip cartoons out of newspapers or magazines and have the students randomly draw a cartoon. I then have them deliver a 2 minute speech on what the characters are doing and what makes the cartoon funny. Another place to get humorous topics is quotations in Reader's Digest or advertisements.

Impromptu speeches are nothing new to speech classes, however, allowing students to interact with each other in a relaxed setting helps to relieve some of the tension. Once students over come the fear of standing before their peers, they can focus on preparation and practicing their speeches instead of their nerves.

References

Anonymous. Communication self-analysis. Structured learning exercise.

Anonymous. What is my label? Structured learning exercise.

Cronin, M. W., Grice, G. L., & Olsen, Jr. R. K. (1994, January). The effects of interactive video instruction in coping with speech fright. Communication Education. (43) 18-19.

Grant, C. A., & Melnick, S. L. (1977). In praise of diversity: some implications. In praise of diversity: a resource book for multicultural education. Multicultural Education Publications, Washington, D. C. 214-221.

Newmark, E., & Asante, M. K. (1976, July). Intercultural communication. Theory into Practice. Speech Communication Association.

Rupp, S. Meat and potatoes dialogue. Structured learning exercise. Fort Hays State University.